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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3516  
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS RIGA 000924

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR/OHI (J BECKER), DRL/SEAS (G RICKMAN)

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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: LATVIA: JEWISH PROPERTY RESTITUTION MOVING FORWARD

REF: RIGA 921

1. Our lobbying efforts of recent weeks appear to have helped unblock stalled progress on Jewish property restitution (reftel). On November 6, the Latvian cabinet approved the draft legislation for Jewish Property Restitution for heirless properties. The legislation will now be moved to the Saeima (parliament). This is a very positive development since the issue appeared stalled despite an agreement between the government and the local Jewish community dating back to June. Representatives of the local Jewish community tell post that they are very satisfied with the cabinet action and cautiously optimistic that parliament will approve the legislation in the coming weeks. Post will continue to follow the issue and stay in touch with the Jewish community to monitor progress.

2. Post no longer believes that the Washington action requested reftel is needed, given the cabinet action. Should there be any difficulties in the legislative process that cannot be addressed here, we will consider if Washington action would be beneficial and report.

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